



To:  
Cc:  
Bcc:  
Subject: Fw: Kalamazoo Waste Dump

EPA Region 5 Records Ctr.



358741

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From: Bianca <biancabw@yahoo.com>  
To: Shari Kolak/R5/USEPA/US@EPA  
Date: 04/17/2007 07:07 AM  
Subject: Kalamazoo Waste Dump

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Note: forwarded message attached.

Ahhh...imagining that irresistible "new car" smell?

Check out new cars at Yahoo! Autos.

----- Message from "Niki Pierce" <more\_bid@hotmail.com> on Mon, 16 Apr 2007 15:30:03 -0400 -----

biancabw@yahoo.com, BrooksKE@kalamazoo.k12.mi.us, kazooguys2@aol.com, DarcangelisJB@k

To: KeanPT@kalamazoo.k12.mi.us, macjaws@juno.com, Millerjs@kalamazoo.k12.mi.us, VaderNI@ka  
RorkPA@kalamazoo.k12.mi.us

Subject: FW: Tell the EPA Not to Force a Toxic Waste Dump on Kalamazoo

To Purchase STAND .... vist:  
[www.nicolegoodpierce.com](http://www.nicolegoodpierce.com)

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From: "Cara LaLumia-Barnes" <celalum@gmail.com>  
To: caralalumia@yahoo.com  
Subject: Tell the EPA Not to Force a Toxic Waste Dump on Kalamazoo  
Date: Sat, 14 Apr 2007 16:06:00 -0400  
Dear friends and family,

I am writing to tell you about a great injustice that is about to be forced upon the City of Kalamazoo, my home for the past fourteen years as well as to many of you. As you might know, Kalamazoo has always been an incubator for creativity and innovation, from Dr. Upjohn's friable pills to Gibson guitars to Bell's beer to the Kalamazoo Promise. During a time of otherwise gloomy economic news in the state of Michigan, Kalamazoo has been a bright spot, despite the loss of hundreds of jobs in the city and outlying areas due to Pfizer's acquisition of Pharmacia/Upjohn and subsequent downsizing. Kalamazoo is a vibrant city, but also one that doesn't need any more tough breaks.

The Kalamazoo River is a beautiful body of water that has been abused for hundreds of years. The paper mills that once lined its banks used the river as a receptacle for waste, slowly contaminating the river sediment with toxic PCBs. The Kalamazoo River was placed on the National Priorities List in 1990 and remains a Federal Superfund Site today. It really needs to be cleaned up. The EPA is set to commence a project this year cleaning a 1.5 mile stretch of the Kalamazoo River near Plainwell. That is a good thing; we can all agree.

**The EPA, however, without consulting or informing the city leadership, has unilaterally decided to move that waste from Plainwell to the old Allied Paper Mill site in Kalamazoo, mere feet from Portage Creek, and in the middle of the city. This site has been used for allegedly "temporary" dumping of PCBs before, and cleanup has been promised for some time. The Allied Paper Mill site is not even licensed to accept hazardous waste. In addition:**

- **The proposed dumping site borders three large, diverse neighborhoods: Edison, Millwood, and Southside/Westnedge Hill.**
- **The proposed dumping site, connecting to the adjacent Blanche Hull Preserve, is the ideal space through which to continue the functional and beautiful Portage Creek Trail. If continued through that existing tract of wooded space, one would be able to travel from South Portage through to Kalamazoo on foot or bike for a total of at least five miles.**
- **The City Council was never consulted or involved in talks, and was not informed until late March for work due to begin in April.**
- **The EPA failed to show at a prearranged meeting at the proposed dumping site because it was open to the public, and initially refused to any meetings that were open to the public.**

The proposed site just so happens to be one-and-a-half blocks from my and Jason's house, which we bought in 2004. It is a great neighborhood, an older neighborhood that is again on the rise; lots of younger people live there who are passionate about Kalamazoo and want to be lifelong residents. An established toxic waste dump in the middle of the neighborhood would help to kill such initiative.

So, I entreat you to contact our Senators and our Congressman, the EPA, and the Kalamazoo City Commission. Tell them that the river sediment from the Plainwell Dam cleanup should be disposed of responsibly and with consensus. Kalamazoo should not be host to a toxic landfill in the middle of our city. The Wayne Disposal Inc. landfill in Detroit is certified to accept this type of contaminant. We should spend the money now and transport the waste to where it does not have to be moved again.

Also, please forward this email to anyone and everyone who would be interested. Kalamazooan or not, we all should object to this type of back-door dealmaking and gambling with citizens' quality of life and the vitality of urban communities.

### **Representatives/Agency Contact Information**

Senator Carl Levin  
202-224-6221 or [senator@levin.senate.gov](mailto:senator@levin.senate.gov)

Senator Debbie Stabenow  
202-224-4822 or [senator@stabenow.senate.gov](mailto:senator@stabenow.senate.gov)  
(Also thank Senator Stabenow for the letter she sent to the EPA Regional Office on behalf of Kalamazoo.)

Congressman Fred Upton  
269-385-0039 or [tellupton@mail.house.gov](mailto:tellupton@mail.house.gov)

Kalamazoo City Commission  
(269) 337-8046  
(269) 337-8182 fax  
241 W. South St. Kalamazoo, MI 49007

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
Link to email, address, and online comment form: <http://www.epa.gov/region5/contact.htm>  
[citizencomplaints@epa.gov](mailto:citizencomplaints@epa.gov)  
Shari Kolak, Remedial Project Manager, (312) 886-6151, [kolak.shari@epa.gov](mailto:kolak.shari@epa.gov)  
Don DeBlasio, Community Involvement Coordinator (ha!), (312) 886-9749

### **Other Sources and Articles:**

Attached is a flyer for RESPECT, a Kalamazoo group formed to oppose the dumping of the PCBs in our city. It includes a contact number/email for those interested in being added to be added to their mailing list.

EPA "Fact Sheet" on the Allied Paper Mill Site, updated March 2007

Kalamazoo 'In the Dark' on PCB Plan , Kalamazoo Gazette, 3/28/07

Video of City Commissioner Sean McCann speaking outside the rally held on April 2nd at the Allied Paper Mill Site, 4/2/07

Public Forum to Address Kalamazoo PCB Issue, Western Michigan University press release, 4/4/07

EPA: Dump Meets All Criteria for PCBs; City, other Opponents Still Looking for Way to Block Sediment from River Cleanup, Kalamazoo Gazette, 4/10/07

Heritage Hills Resident Fights PCB Dumping in her Community, Kalamazoo Gazette 4/12/07

(Heritage Hills is a retirement community)

Anger and Reason: Tempers Flare during Session on PCB Dumping Plan, Kalamazoo Gazette, 4/13/07

Stabenow Queries EPA on Landfill Issues, Kalamazoo Gazette, 4/13/07

Thanks for reading,  
Cara

[attachment "RESPECT\_flyer.doc" deleted by Catherine Gibbs/R5/USEPA/US]

## **RESPECT**

### **(Responsible Environmental Strategy and Planning for Effective Confrontation against Toxics)**

**RESPECT** is a group of Kalamazoo County residents calling on the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to reverse its decision to dump hazardous PCB-laden waste from the dredging of the Kalamazoo River at the former Allied Paper site in Kalamazoo, and instead use a proper, licensed disposal site.

Our demand to respect the health and safety of our people is based on the following facts:

**FACT:** The federal Superfund law under which the dredging is taking place requires community input in its deliberations. This law was violated in the secret negotiations that led to the decision to dump PCBs at the Allied Paper site.

**FACT:** PCBs are a proven cause of neurological and reproductive problems in humans, and possibly a cause of cancer.

**FACT:** In dry, windy weather, PCBs could become airborne and spread throughout the area. Rodents, birds, and other animals could also spread the PCBs.

**FACT:** The current plan will result in a mound over 40 feet high at the Allied Paper site, even though only 1.3% of the total amount of PCBs in the Kalamazoo River is to be dredged in the current project. A much larger, more suitable site will be necessary for future dredging projects. Such a site should be used for all the PCB-laden waste to be taken from the river.

**FACT:** There is no lining under the proposed dump site, and thus PCB-laden water from the dumping could pass into the ground water.

**FACT:** No studies have been done on the potential effect on the city's drinking water, and no assurances have been given that the water source for over 100,000 will not be affected.

**FACT:** Many homes and businesses, two schools, a senior citizen residence, two low-income health clinics, and several churches are located throughout the area and along the routes to be used by trucks transporting these hazardous materials, posing a threat to health, safety, and normal living of the entire community.

### **RESPECT demands:**

Immediately cancel all plans to dump the PCB waste at the Allied Paper site, and instead transport it to the nearest licensed, approved dump site.

No more secret negotiations regarding the future of our community.

No more dumping of hazardous substances in any unlicensed, unapproved sites.

For more information call or email:

Amber Colegrove: 269-615-0181/ ambe9876@yahoo.com

## RESPECT

### (Responsible Environmental Strategy and Planning for Effective Confrontation against Toxics)

RESPECT is a group of Kalamazoo County residents calling on the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to reverse its decision to dump hazardous PCB-laden waste from the dredging of the Kalamazoo River at the former Allied Paper site in Kalamazoo, and instead use a proper, licensed disposal site.

#### How can we stop this from happening?

Stay updated on the issue \*SIGN UP FOR MAILINGS, EMAILS OR CALL LISTS\*

Contact your Elected Officials and tell them to stop the dumping!

US Representative Fred Upton: 269-385-0039 or [tellupton@mail.house.gov](mailto:tellupton@mail.house.gov)

US Senator Debbie Stabenow: 202-224-4822 or [senator@stabenow.senate.gov](mailto:senator@stabenow.senate.gov)

US Senator Carl Levin: 202-224-6221 or [senator@levin.senate.gov](mailto:senator@levin.senate.gov)

Feel free to use the sample script below and add in any of the facts (reverse side), but also try to make it personal. Tell them why it matters to *you*.

#### Sample script:

Dear Honorable \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a concerned citizen of Kalamazoo. I would like to bring to your attention the EPA's recent decision to allow the dumping of tons of PCB-contaminated waste at an uncertified site in the middle of a core neighborhood. I am vehemently against this decision because of the risks it poses to our community.

The EPA's decision is dangerous to our community for many reasons. First, PCBs are toxic substances and pose serious health threats to our environment, ourselves, and future generations. The contaminated site may also adversely affect the drinking water of this community as well as that of communities much further away. Not only the water we drink but the air we breathe is in jeopardy, as PCBs may become airborne, or be spread by animals. Second, the decision was made undemocratically, behind closed doors, and without the consultation of any of the affected citizens of Kalamazoo. Finally, this decision will dramatically lower property values and negatively impact the vitality of the community surrounding the proposed site.

I, along with my fellow community members, implore you to not let our backyards become the site for unlicensed toxic dumping. We urge you to pressure the EPA into reversing this decision.

Sincerely,

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#### Want more information?

Contact: Amber Colegrove 269-615-0181 or [ambe9876@yahoo.com](mailto:ambe9876@yahoo.com)

En español: Marlene Ramos 956-579-1860 or [k04mr01@kzoo.edu](mailto:k04mr01@kzoo.edu)

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[Http://www.epa.gov/R5Super/Npl/Michigan/MID006007306.htm](http://www.epa.gov/R5Super/Npl/Michigan/MID006007306.htm)

Last Updated On Tuesday, March 09, 2010

## Region 5 Superfund (SF)

You are here: [EPA Home](#) [Region 5](#) [Superfund](#) [NPL fact sheets](#) [Michigan](#) [ALLIED PAPER, INC./PORTAGE CREEK/KALAMAZOO RIVER](#)

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### ALLIED PAPER, INC./PORTAGE CREEK/KALAMAZOO RIVER

**EPA ID# MID006007306**

Last Updated: November, 2009

**U.S. EPA REGION 5**  
KALAMAZOO COUNTY  
KALAMAZOO

Congressional District # 06

### Site Description

The Allied Paper, Inc./Portage Creek/Kalamazoo River Superfund site includes five disposal areas, five paper mill properties, an approximately 80-mile stretch of the Kalamazoo River from Morrow Dam to Lake Michigan, and a three-mile stretch of Portage Creek.

At this time, the site is divided into five cleanup projects known as operable units (OUs):

- OU #1, Allied Paper Property/Bryant Mill Pond Area;
- OU #2, Willow Boulevard and A-Site Landfill;
- OU #3, King Highway Landfill;
- OU #4, 12th Street Landfill; and
- OU #5, the Portage Creek and Kalamazoo River sediments.

The primary site contaminant is polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a hazardous substance and probable human carcinogen. PCBs were introduced to Portage Creek and the Kalamazoo River through past discharges and disposal of PCB-contaminated paper residuals by the paper industry. The five disposal areas are situated on the river banks and contain millions of cubic yards of PCB-contaminated waste. It has been estimated that the river sediments contain more than 120,000 pounds of PCBs. The contaminated sediments have largely been deposited in four impoundment areas.

In February 2007 two Administrative Orders on Consent (AOCs) were signed by both the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Millennium Holdings, LLC and Georgia-Pacific, LLC (collectively known as the Kalamazoo River Study Group (KRSKG)). One AOC requires the KRSKG to conduct a supplemental remedial investigation/feasibility study (RI/FS) for the Portage Creek and Kalamazoo River sediments, and the other called for a time-critical removal action (TCRA) of sediments in a portion of the Kalamazoo River near Plainwell, MI. (Additional information is provided below in the "Cleanup Progress" section.) EPA is currently the lead regulatory agency on this project and is working closely with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to oversee the cleanup activities.

### Site Responsibility

This site is being addressed through federal, state, and potentially responsible parties' actions.

### Threats and Contaminants

The site is contaminated with PCBs, a hazardous substance and probable human carcinogen. It has been estimated that the river sediments contain over 120,000 pounds of PCBs, and the five unconfined disposal areas situated on the river banks contain millions of cubic yards of PCB-contaminated waste.

## Cleanup Progress

EPA's cleanup approach for the Kalamazoo River is to first eliminate ongoing sources of PCBs, which includes the exposed paper wastes along the river banks and flood plain soils (or impoundments), and then address in-stream sediments. The exposed paper wastes are located behind State-owned and privately-owned dams along the river. Before evaluating cleanup options for in-stream sediments, EPA will investigate upstream sources of PCBs and evaluate the existing landfill OUs and paper mill properties to ensure they are not a source of PCBs to the river. Generally, EPA's cleanup will begin upstream and work downstream on a reach-by-reach and dam-to-dam basis.

## INTERIM ACTIONS

To date, a number of initial measures have been taken to reduce the release of PCBs from the disposal areas. In 1992, a fence was erected around the entire OU #1 Allied Paper property, including the Bryant Mill Pond area (approximately 70 acres on Portage Creek), to restrict access and thereby reduce the potential for exposure from direct contact with exposed sediments. Because of concern about the ongoing release of PCBs from the Bryant Mill Pond area to Portage Creek and the slow progress of actions under the state-lead RI/FS, EPA entered negotiations in 1997 with H.M. Holdings, Inc., to expedite an action to address the Bryant Mill Pond sediments. In November 1997, EPA and H.M. Holdings reached an agreement in principal for H.M. Holdings to fund, up to a certain monetary limit, an EPA-conducted removal and onsite containment action for the Bryant Mill Pond sediments. The Removal Action began in June 1998. Portage Creek was temporarily diverted from its normal streambed in order to conduct "dry" excavation of 150,000 cubic yards of the creek bed and floodplain soils. Excavation work was completed in May 1999. Excavated material was placed in the Historical Residual Dewatering Lagoon and the Bryant Former Residual Dewatering Lagoons. PCB concentrations remaining after the removal action were less than 1 part per million (ppm). The cost of the removal action was \$7.5 million.

Other interim actions that have been completed include:

- Sheet pile and temporary cap installation at the Willow Blvd/A-site (OU #2) to prevent direct erosion into the river
- Sheet pile installation at the Allied Paper site (OU #1) along with a cap

In June 2009, the KRSG completed a time-critical removal action to remove PCB-contaminated sediment from the Kalamazoo River's Plainwell Impoundment near Plainwell, MI. The KRSG conducted the TCRA under a February 2007 AOC, with EPA oversight. Work began in March 2007. A total of 130,000 cubic yards of contaminated in-stream and bank sediment were removed by this action. Consistent with the federal Toxic Substances Control Act, sediments containing PCB concentrations greater than 50 ppm were disposed at Environmental Quality Co.'s Wayne Disposal Landfill in Belleville, Michigan. Sediments with concentrations less than this, which are considered non-hazardous waste and represent 80 percent of the waste material, were disposed at Allied Waste's C and C Landfill near Marshall, MI, and its Ottawa Farms Landfill near Coopersville, MI. The estimated cost of this project was \$30 million. This project also rerouted the Kalamazoo River to its original channel and removed the dam near Plainwell. The Kalamazoo River is now free-flowing from Kalamazoo to



**Otsego City, MI.**

In June 2009, Georgia-Pacific LLC (GP) and EPA entered into a legal agreement committing GP to conduct a time-critical removal action in the Plainwell #2 Dam area. The cleanup began in August 2009 approximately three miles upstream of the recently-completed Plainwell Dam cleanup. This Plainwell #2 removal project includes a two-mile stretch of the Kalamazoo River. During the 2009 construction season, GP removed contaminated soil along the north side of the Kalamazoo River. Approximately 4,900 linear feet of riverbank was cleared, excavated and restored, with approximately 4,725 cubic yards of soil and debris disposed off-site at the Allied Waste C&C Landfill in Marshall, MI, and at Ottawa County Farms Landfill in Coopersville, MI. All planned excavation activities were completed on the north side of the river in 2009. Depending on weather conditions, clearing and access road construction may occur on the south side of the Kalamazoo River during the winter months in preparation for cleanup activities in 2010. Cleanup activities in the Plainwell #2 Dam area are anticipated to be completed in 2010 and will remove 90 percent of the PCB-contaminated soil from the area at a cost of about \$10 million.

**OPERABLE UNIT 1: ALLIED LANDFILL**

The Remedial Investigation Report for the Allied Site developed by MDEQ was finalized and approved by EPA in March 2008. A groundwater investigation to determine the impacts, if any, from OU #1 was completed in the summer of 2009. The groundwater investigation confirmed the conclusions in the RI report that groundwater from the Allied Site is flowing toward Portage Creek. In October 2009, Millennium Holdings submitted to EPA the draft Feasibility Study Report which examines a range of cleanup alternatives. EPA anticipates presenting to the public a proposed cleanup plan for the Allied Site in summer 2010.

**OPERABLE UNIT 2: WILLOW BOULEVARD AND A-SITE LANDFILL**

The Willow Blvd/A-Site Landfill OU #2 was under MDEQ control through completion of the RI/FS Report in 2006. EPA completed a Record of Decision for the closure of the landfill in 2006. In September 2009, the legal settlement between EPA and Georgia Pacific for design and cleanup at the Willow Boulevard/A-Site Landfill was approved by a federal District Court. Georgia-Pacific will consolidate waste materials, construct a permanent landfill cap and install a ground water monitoring system. The company will complete design work in 2010 and construct the landfill cap and ground water system in 2011.

**OPERABLE UNIT 3: KING HIGHWAY LANDFILL**

Cap construction at the King Highway Landfill (OU #3) was completed in fall 2001. In summer 2002, the cap was seeded for vegetative growth. In the fall of 2007, a gas collection trench was constructed at the landfill. The King Highway Landfill remains under MDEQ control and the remedy is currently near completion.

**OPERABLE UNIT 4: 12th STREET LANDFILL**

In September 2001, EPA signed the Record of Decision for the 12th St. Landfill. The remedy includes excavation of PCB residuals that have migrated from the landfill and will be placed back in the landfill. The side slopes of the landfill will be stabilized and a cap will be installed. Monitoring wells for long-term monitoring will be installed. To accommodate the channel diversion as part of the TCRA near the Plainwell Dam, the slope of the 12th street landfill adjacent to the Kalamazoo River was reshaped, upgraded, stabilized and restored in 2007.

Contamination adjacent to the river has been removed in the vicinity of the 12th Street Landfill and remedial design work for the remaining portion of the 12th St. Landfill is being developed. This work is being conducted by Weyerhaeuser with oversight of EPA and MDEQ. As part of the landfill design, Weyerhaeuser will consolidate waste material, construct a landfill cap and install a groundwater monitoring system in 2010.

#### **OPERABLE UNIT 5: PORTAGE CREEK AND KALAMAZOO RIVER SEDIMENTS**

On February 21, 2007, EPA reached two settlement agreements with Georgia-Pacific Corporation and Millennium Holdings LLC, two of the Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) collectively known as the Kalamazoo River Study Group. The agreements were a result of 2 years of mediated negotiations between the PRPs and EPA, MDEQ and the Natural Resource Trustees (including the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, MDEQ, Michigan Department of Attorney General, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).

Under one agreement, KRSR agreed to perform the TCRA sediment excavation in the Kalamazoo River near Plainwell, MI (as described above under "Interim Actions"). Under the other agreement, KRSR agreed to conduct a Supplemental RI/FS on the 80-mile stretch of the Kalamazoo River from Morrow Dam to Lake Michigan and Portage Creek from Cork Street to the confluence with the Kalamazoo River. Although large amounts of data have been obtained throughout the river, numerous areas were identified where further investigation is required. The Kalamazoo River was divided into seven areas. Currently, supplemental RI/FS work is underway in Area 1 which includes a 21-mile stretch of the Kalamazoo River from Morrow Dam to the Plainwell Dam and 3 miles of Portage Creek. Phases 1 and 2 of the sampling efforts in Area 1 have been completed and it is anticipated that Phase 3 sampling work in Area 1 will be completed in December 2009.

#### **MILL PROPERTIES**

Several old paper mills exist along the Kalamazoo River. EPA is investigating these areas to determine if the mill properties, although inactive, are a source of PCB contamination to the river.

Work at the Georgia-Pacific Kalamazoo Mill and former Hawthorne Mills (consisting of removal of buildings, removal of contaminated soil and site stabilization) was completed in July 2007. In December 2008, Georgia-Pacific submitted a report to EPA asserting its position that the two properties no longer contribute PCBs to the Kalamazoo River. In July 2009, EPA concurred with this report and no further work on these mill properties is anticipated at this time.

Preliminary work to remove PCB-contaminated sediment from the banks of the Plainwell Mill began in the fall of 2007 and was completed in March 2008. Approximately 5,000 cubic yards of material was removed. The first phase of the Remedial Investigation, a cursory groundwater investigation, was completed in December 2008. Currently, Weyerhaeuser is conducting Phase 2 of the site investigation at the Plainwell Mill. Soil and groundwater samples are being collected during December 2009 and January 2010, and the results are expected in spring 2010.

#### **MILLENNIUM BANKRUPTCY**

On January 6, 2009, Lyondell Chemical Company and 79 affiliated debtors filed for bankruptcy under Chapter 11 reorganization. One of the debtors is Millennium Holdings, LLC,

one of the PRPs at the Kalamazoo River site. Bankruptcy reorganization is typically a lengthy process that could take a couple years to complete. Millennium Holdings is continuing to work on OU #1 (Allied Site) but has ceased work on other areas of the project; Georgia-Pacific is addressing those obligations. All work on the project under the two 2007 AOCs with EPA is proceeding according to schedule. EPA is currently evaluating options under bankruptcy and environmental law to ensure that the cleanup of the Kalamazoo River site continues.

## Contacts

Remedial Project Manager, U.S. EPA  
Michael Berkoff (berkoff.michael@epa.gov)  
(312) 353-8983

Community Involvement Coordinator, U.S. EPA  
Don De Blasio  
(312) 886-9749

## Aliases

ALLIED CORP KALAMAZOO PLT  
ALLIED PAPER/PORTAGE CREEK/KALAMAZOO RIV  
PORTAGE CREEK  
ALLIED PAPER  
ALLIED PAPER/PORTAGE CK/KALAMAZOO RIVER

## Site Profile Information

This Profile Provides You With Information On EPA's Cleanup Progress At This Superfund Site.

[WMU Home](#) > [About WMU](#) > [WMU News](#)



## **Public forum addresses Kalamazoo River PCB cleanup**

April 4, 2007

KALAMAZOO--Western Michigan University will host a public forum for Kalamazoo-area residents, city officials, scientists and environmental nonprofit leaders, to discuss the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's recently announced plans to excavate and dispose of toxin-contaminated wastes from the Kalamazoo River.

"Kalamazoo River and PCBs: A Public Education Forum" will take place from 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday, April 12, in Room 209 of the Bernhard Center. The forum will provide members of the Kalamazoo community the opportunity to become educated on the background of the river's pollution and related issues, as well as discuss possible actions for a solution that meets citizen and community needs.

Panelists will include Dr. Duane Hampton, WMU associate professor of geosciences; Dr. Charles Ide, WMU director of the Environmental Institute and professor of biological sciences; A. Lee Kirk, city attorney, city of Kalamazoo; Bruce Merchant, director of public services, city of Kalamazoo; and Jeff Spoelstra, coordinator, Kalamazoo River Watershed Council.

Additional panelists include Sam Borries, EPA on-scene coordinator; Shari Kolak, EPA remedial project manager; and Paul Bucholtz, senior project manager, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's Superfund Section.

Pollution of the Kalamazoo River can be traced back to the 1800s when the Industrial Revolution drew papermaking factories to the area's plentiful resources, including the water in the Kalamazoo River. Over time, the river's primary function became that of an industrial waste disposal site. In the 1960s, local scientists found the pesticide DDT and large amounts of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, in the river. By the late 1970s, fish-consumption advisories were released and a preliminary assessment of the river's PCB problem was ordered. In 1990, the federal government placed the Kalamazoo River on its National Priorities List for cleanup, making it what is commonly known as a Superfund Site.

"PCBs are highly toxic manmade chemicals, that once had wide industrial use," says Dr. Sarah Hill, assistant professor of anthropology and environmental studies at WMU. "Studies have shown an association between PCBs and numerous health problems, including reproductive disorders, endocrine system disruption and probably some cancers."

According to the EPA's Region 5 Cleanup report, the affected area stretches 80 miles across Michigan, from Saugatuck on the west to about 10 miles east of Battle Creek. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality estimates that this area contains more than 110,000 pounds of PCBs and 8 million cubic yards of contaminated river and floodplain sediments. PCB-contaminated waste also was placed in four disposal areas near the river.

Cleanup of one 1.5-mile stretch of the river between Plainwell and Otsego, Mich., is scheduled to begin sometime this month, but issues surrounding how the toxic chemicals will be extracted and where they will be disposed of have raised significant concerns among residents and city officials. Hill says the upcoming forum seeks to address these longstanding concerns, and provide a historical overview and current situational analysis of the Kalamazoo River and the toxic pollutants that have been left to area residents by industries that have operated along its banks.

"Kalamazoo River and PCBs: A Public Education Forum" is sponsored by WMU's Environmental Institute and Students for Sustainable Earth, a registered student organization at WMU. It is being presented in conjunction with the University's Earth Week activities.

For more information, contact Sarah Hill at [sarah.hill@wmich.edu](mailto:sarah.hill@wmich.edu).

**Related article**

[Earth Week celebration runs through Thursday](#)

**Media contact:** Tonya Hernandez, (269) 387-8400,  
[tonya.hernandez@wmich.edu](mailto:tonya.hernandez@wmich.edu)

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